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Q1 Critically analyze the socio-political and economic causes of the French Revolution. To what extent did the revolution achieve its objectives, and how did Napoleon's rise to power reshape these goals?

ANSWER #1

INTRODUCTION:

The French revolution was a time of social, political, and economic upheaval in France. The revolution itself was marked by significant socio-political and economic causes in the late 18th century. Consequently, the centuries old empire of the French monarch was brought down in shambles by the French people seeking Liberty, Equality, and Democracy. However, the objectives of this revolution were not achieved completely, rather a partial victory. However, in the following years, the rise of the military dictator Napoleon Bonaparte rewrote the destiny of French populace rendering much of the revolution's goals fruitless. Thus, the late 18th century ~~was~~ in France brought momentous socio-political and economic waves, which spread to the parts of Europe.

CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

1. Notorious System of the Ancien Regime:

The France,

before revolution, was structured primarily on huge disparities between different classes. It gave the shape of a pyramid by placing the clergy on the top, nobility; the second, whereby the peasantry, being the lower most echelon of the society.

However, the perks and privileges enjoyed by the clergy and nobility were primarily carved out by the constant hardwork of the peasant class.

Thus, the peasantry being poverty stricken bore the brunt of the upper classes' luxuries. Such disparities between the different sections of society made the revolution inevitable.

2. Heavy Taxation on the Peasant

Class: The taxation system in the pre-revolution France was nothing short of a disaster. The clergy and Nobility were exempt from the taxes, however, in some areas the lower class were paying 10 times more than the original tax due to the extra charges such as the infamous salt tax, known as Gabelle. The burden of taxes

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upon the lowest echelon of the society was yet another turning point in the history of pre-revolution France that led to the unremakable social upheaval.

3. Extravagance and Luxuries of the Monarch:

The king Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette enjoyed all kinds of luxuries at their doorstep, while the local Frenchmen were running out of food to eat due to the volcano eruption in Iceland in the year 1782, which was followed by the season of drought. Thus, the common people reeling under the burden of poverty, while the monarch being busy in renovating the palace of Versailles turning it into a symbol of extravagant luxury turned out to be the death of the French monarchy.

4. THOUGHT Provoking Writings Of the Philosophers

As kettleby opines, "The writers of all kinds inspired the French revolution", it became evident that the writings of the Philosophers of the time from across the Europe brought a wave of awakening among the French people. The anti-clerical publications of Voltaire, coupled with the liberalist perspective of John Locke and the

democratic ideals of Rousseau played a crucial role in inspiring the general populace of France.

Extent To Which The Revolution Achieved Its Objectives :

The French revolution had three clear objectives : Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

While these ideals shaped the entire revolution, their achievement remained partial and complex.

a. **Liberty:** The revolution abolished the monarchy and established a French Republic, however, the "Declaration of the Rights of man of the Citizen" in 1789 despite the outlined freedoms, those were never fully granted.

b. **Equality:** The revolution, in truth, started because of the utter inequality among the social classes, and it sought to end it. However, true social and economic equality was not fully realized as the Bourgeoisie gained more more power and even so, the inequalities persisted among the lower class.

c. **Fraternity:** The revolution promoted unity and solidarity, however the internal strife between the revolutionary factions, such as the Jacobins

and Girondins, led to more political instability. Thus, the power struggle persisted.

NAPOLÉON'S RISE RESHAPING THE REVOLUTIONARY GOALS:

Napoleon Bonaparte emerged as a stabilizing force amidst the Reign of Terror. However, his rise significantly shaped the ideals of the French revolution.

1. Preservation of the Revolutionary Ideals:

In the initial years, Napoleon sought to preserve some of the revolutionary goals such as the legal equality through the infamous 'Napoleonic Code', which abolished feudal privileges and granted civil liberties. However, later the cessation of power into Napoleon's hands changed the course of the French ideals for revolution.

2. Authoritarian Rule: Napoleon contradicted with the revolution ideals like democracy, and consolidated power in his own hands. By declaring himself the emperor in 1804, he reestablished the monarchy and therefore, undermined the democratic ideals, the revolution had sought to bring. ^{Thus,} His centralization of power and authoritarian

rule betrayed the ideals of the French revolution such as the liberty & freedom.

3. Expansion of the Revolutionary Ideas and the Social Impact: Napoleon shared the ideas of revolution throughout Europe by his military conquests, he sought to practice the French ideals in the occupied territories, thereby undermining the local liberty and imposing French rule. Moreover, Napoleon's reforms at home were mostly favourable to the bourgeoisie, which benefited from the stability he provided, and the working class still suffered undermining the idea of fraternity.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS: The French revolution was one of the most significant event in the history of Europe bringing the whole of Europe under the effects of the awakening. However, it was also the era of great chaos, failing to achieve the objectives it had begun with.

The power in France was still largely occupied by one sect of the society, the economic and social disparities were still evident and more than that, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte undermined

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all the ideals French Revolution fought for.

CONCLUSION: The French revolution which was caused by economic and social disparities among the nobility and peasantry, failed to bring the required changes, in order for the inequality to vanish and the ideals of equality, freedom and fraternity to reign. Moreover, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte reshaped the French revolution ideals in a way that it greatly sidelined the original idea of a revolution in the first place. Thus, French revolution is one of the most significant event in the Europe's history, but was mixed with chaos as well as disappointments.